



Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland

Testimony in Support of HB 933- End-Of-Life Option Act (The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings and the Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass Act)

TO: Representative Josephine A. Pena-Melnyk
FROM: Rev. Dr. Alexa Fraser, Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland
Medical Aid in Dying Lead Advocate
DATE: March 8, 2023

Representatives, thank you for letting me speak today.

I am Rev. Alexa Fraser.

I first spoke to you in 2015 to tell you about my father ending his life with a gun as he refused the pain, suffering, and loss of autonomy his advancing Parkinson's was causing.

I would not have chosen this end of life for him, but he spoke through his actions.

Then in 2016, I testified again because I had been diagnosed with cancer.

I'm delighted to say that my cancer is in remission, but I still support this option for those who want it.

Most recently, I testified here in 2019 after I had become a Unitarian Universalist minister.

I follow the dictates of my faith, which treasures bodily autonomy and personal agency.

But some people don't want to let me or others speak for themselves.

That's why I was shocked what I read in a *Baltimore Sun* article about a pro-life rally here in Annapolis eight days ago.

Anti-abortion speaker and podcaster Gloria Purvis was quoted as saying in part:

"We have to speak for those who cannot. That includes...the person at the end of their life ... We are their voices."

No, Ms. Purvis, people at the end of life are speaking for themselves, but you are choosing not to listen to them.

In fact, a January poll by Gonzales Research & Media Services shows seven out of 10 Maryland voters (70%) age 60 and older support medical aid in dying, and more than six out of 10 of them (62%) personally want the option for themselves.

Ms. Purvis, the plurality of pro-life voters because that poll shows 49 percent of them support medical aid in dying. Nor do you speak for elders, the United Seniors of Maryland, a group which represents over 2.5 million seniors in this state also support this bill.

I have worked in hospitals as a chaplain; I have been with people when they were on their deathbeds.

All of them know how to speak for themselves and will be able to do so with the passage of this bill.

Thank you.

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